

Transoceanic Trade: The Reconstruction of Al-Mukhâ through VOC Records: Interview with C.G. Brouwer

After climbing the steep steps of their town house along Amsterdam's busy Ceintuurbaan, Carolien Stolte and Leonard Blussé are warmly greeted by Kees Brouwer and his wife Rie. As soon as we are seated, we are served original Yemeni coffee. In a spacious living room that contains without doubt the largest library on Yemen in the Netherlands if not Western Europe, and is decorated with several Yemeni oil paintings, this sets a fitting scene for an interview that will focus on South Arabian trade and the larger Middle East. However, as we remark, Brouwer's recent study of Yemen's overseas trade makes the point that in the seventeenth century coffee was not at all the prime export commodity of Al-Mukhâ, the trading emporium that Brouwer has studied in such detail. He cheerfully affirms this, saying that it is not sufficiently realised that coffee was really a by-product in the early days of Al-Mukhâ's trade. His experiences with (and in) this port would be the pièce de résistance of our interview with him—but first we must go back to earlier years.

Could you tell us something about your background?

My experience as a boy both at home and at school has to such an extent given shape to my later research that I perhaps should speak in some detail about it. I was born in 1936 in Amsterdam, where my father was a metal worker at a shipyard. But that term is an understatement: he was actually an incredibly dexterous and skilled craftsman who, for instance, made cylinders, piston rods and propeller shafts for ships' engines. He could repair anything and as a result we often had lots of fish to eat from grateful fishermen whom he had helped out, repairing their engines even in the dead of night. The city that most people see nowadays is not my Amsterdam. I can still say that I was brought up in an Amsterdam that really was a port city of old, with businesses and workshops connected to shipping everywhere around us.

Since the 1930s, my in-laws had owned a little cabin near the village of Ransdorp, in the Waterland region north-east of Amsterdam. This is an extremely idyllic part of the Dutch countryside that has remained

basically unspoiled since the seventeenth century. Ransdorp is famous for its truncated church tower, which you see depicted on numerous seventeenth- or eighteenth-century drawings or etchings of the IJ estuary of Amsterdam—for instance, Rembrandt van Rijn's drawing of 'The church at Ransdorp.' Legend has it that the top of the tower was chipped off by the bowsprit of an East Indiaman that was not able to tack in time. The cabin, which Rie and I still own, is amidst meadows, pools and lakes where we sail our little boat and live in complete harmony with nature during the summer period. The popular name for Ransdorp used to be 'Rarup' or 'Rarob,' and that was exactly the name of the flute ship aboard which Pieter van den Broecke, the hero of my research on early seventeenth-century Yemen, made an explorative voyage to the Red Sea in 1638. Hence I have attached the name of 'D'Fluyte Rarob' to my private publishing house, about which I presently hope to tell you more.

What about your school years?

In the early 1950s, I had the kind of excellent Jesuit education that just does not exist anymore. My teachers at the Ignatius College in Amsterdam all had doctoral degrees and were well-known scholars. It is touching how completely devoted they were to bringing out the best in all of us boys. Apart from languages, mathematics and sciences—the usual curriculum—we were taught music, singing in the school choir and playing in its orchestra. I played the cello passionately; even today I cherish a great love of that instrument, admiring composers such as Witold Lutoslawski, Rodion Shchedrin and Tigran Manssurjan. We read Jean Racine as 14-year-olds in the second form, translating his French alexandrines into Dutch ones, and of course we had to learn by heart the verses of that great Dutch playwright, Joost van den Vondel, townsman and contemporary of Rembrandt. We were literally immersed in the arts, in music, in literature, and painting. It was in those years that I became a worshipper of modern Dutch poets like Adriaan Roland Holst, and most of all the incomparable Jan Hendrik Leopold, whose translations of Omar Khayyam are truly gems of literature that made me aware of Persian mysticism. As a schoolboy, I wrote two theatre pieces myself, one of which, in the fashion of Roland Holst's 'heathen ideas,' was promptly banned from performance by my teachers.

After secondary school, I first attended teacher training college (*kweekschool*) where I met Rie, and ever since then we have been inseparable. Not quite ready to take up teaching, I decided to finish my studies with an academic degree in Dutch language and literature at the *Gemeente*

Universiteit van Amsterdam (now Amsterdam University). Here too, it was a great privilege to be taught by capable professors. Although I do not think this will be of great concern to *Itinerario's* non-Dutch readers, I have to add that I was taught by impressive figures, among whom was the authoritarian philologist W.G. Hellings, a famous Vondel specialist, who introduced both the codicological approach to medieval manuscripts and the bibliographical analysis of the printed book into academia at that time. C. van de Kieft, in charge of medieval history and auxiliary sciences, showed me how to decipher charters and documents with the help of palaeographical and linguistic skills. Jacques Presser, specialising in modern Dutch history, a sparkling successor to Jan Romein, taught me to pose challenging questions about the past. Later on their teachings turned out to be of great importance for my research on manuscripts, books and documents related to Yemeni history. I feel grateful to them all.

You seem to have had a very dedicated approach to your studies right from the beginning.

Well, you are jumping the gun here so to say, because I was just going to tell you that after two years of university I was thoroughly fed up with the academic world, and so in 1962 Rie and I decided that we were going to make a *Bildungsreise* of one or two years with a donkey through Yugoslavia. But since it turned out that we were not exactly welcomed by the bureaucracy of Marshal Tito's paradise we continued our trip through Macedonia and Greece and walked down south through the valley of Thessalia and the Pindos Mountains all the way to Athens. We slept in a tent or in the open air, and everywhere we were treated with the hospitality that Greece has been famous for since antiquity. Once a week we bought, or simply received, a five kilo loaf of bread from farmers or shepherds; and they fed our donkey too, with the notable exception of the monks of one of the Meteora monasteries who refused to do so. That still bothers me!

From Piraeus, an exciting port, we took the boat to Alexandria and settled in Cairo for a while. We then travelled up the Nile aboard the Sudanese postal boat—mind you, the Aswan dam was not yet in operation—and visited a number of Nubian villages, admiring Byzantine churches and Pharaonic temples alike, which now, unfortunately, have been swallowed up by the river or moved elsewhere—such as Abu Simbel. I should emphasise that although we did visit many monuments, Rie and I were much more fascinated by Islamic architecture and contemporary Egyptian life than by the remnants of antiquity. A life-long passion for

the Arab world was born on this trip, and in that sense it really was a formative experience.

Via the Red Sea littoral—with its oil-derricks and aquariums—we returned to Suez and Cairo, sailed to Beirut and witnessed the tragedies of the Palestinian camps. Shortly after we arrived in Damascus, in March 1963, the revolution broke out and Assad came to power. Thus we had to flee to Jordan where we again faced the hopeless situation in the Palestinian camps and the understandable outrage of their inhabitants against Israel. Back in Holland, finally, I not only again picked up my Dutch studies but also started with Arabic, which I had learned to speak on our wanderings.

In the 1960s, the IMNO, the ‘Institute of the Modern Near East’ in Amsterdam, was an organisation consisting of two completely divergent tribal groups of staff members: those who had graduated in Leiden and were basically philologists and linguists—formidable scholars in their own right but strangely distant from today’s Middle East—and the other group, with people like myself and Rudolph Peters—nowadays professor of Islamic law at the institute mentioned, who wrote a Ph.D. on the role of ‘jihād’ in colonial times—who were deeply involved in what was going on in present-day Arabistan. One other such adventurer was Nikolaos van Dam, now Her Majesty’s Ambassador in Jakarta, but then a student of tribal factions within the Syrian army. His Ph.D. thesis, rendered into Arabic, is still being studied today in Syria and only available within army circles!

How did your own academic career henceforth progress?

In 1969, I got my degree in Dutch studies, with a subsidiary degree in Arabic. At about the same time, I was appointed staff member in the Dutch Department, teaching medieval literature and codicology. Among my colleagues were eminent scholars such as Eddie Grootes, Bert Paasman—since 2002 in charge of the colonial and post-colonial history of culture and literature¹—and Herman Pleij. A few words about my BA and MA theses may be called for. The former focused on Willem Godschalck van Focquenbroch, the latter on Aernout van Overbeke, both of whom lived in the seventeenth century. Focquenbroch, a physician and burlesque poet, served in the West Indian Company (WIC), whereas Van Overbeke, a lawyer and poet, was an employee of the East India Company (VOC). My investigations brought me into contact with the VOC archivist, *Mevrouw* [Mrs.] M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofs, as we all piously named her, with whom I would work later on. Already close to her retirement at the General State Archives in The Hague, she had finished her impressive

Ph.D. thesis,² a reply to Job van Leur's pioneering work,³ and had also completed the inventory of the VOC deposit at the *Algemeen Rijksarchief*.⁴ She was thus both an eminent archivist and a formidable scholar who in the next decade sired a new generation of VOC historians. I myself was not yet ready for all that.

As far as my Arab studies are concerned, I had chosen medieval Arab history as my field of study. So I wrote an elaborate essay on Ibn al-Athîr and his famous *Al-Kâmil fî al-Târikh* ('The Complete History'), checking whether his account of Salâh al-Dîn's reconquest of Palestine in 1187, causing the fall of the Crusaders' kingdom, can be considered faithful to the events, especially when compared to the authoritative relations of contemporary biographers such as Ibn Shaddâd, Abû Shâma and 'Imâd al-Dîn.

Well, let me now continue my story. I soon observed, while lecturing on [Middle] Eastern themes or motives in Dutch medieval literature that few students were interested, even though I tried to carefully select attractive research subjects such as pilgrims' travelogues to Jerusalem, Jacob van Maerlant's representation of Muslims and Hein van Aken's call for a new Crusade.⁵ I did not always have, moreover, the freedom to treat Oriental influences in the Department of Dutch Studies. So I felt increasingly limited by these institutional boundaries, and I noticed that I was slowly but surely drifting away from my Dutch-oriented comrades: I had a strong Arab perspective.

How about the 'academic climate' in Amsterdam in those years?

I was quite devoted to leftist ideas in those years—perhaps even more so than my own students—and deeply involved in the democratisation movement at Amsterdam University. But I became increasingly disillusioned: all those reforms did not lead to more capable, autonomous or proactive students; all they really accomplished was slowing down the decision-making processes by endless arguments and squabbles. We did not discuss the nature of academic teaching, or anything relating to the content of our work, but we did pull all-nighters discussing policy with regard to less urbane topics such as the right to smoke during the courses, grade evaluations etc. Still, I found Leiden University scarier in those days—there the students addressed each other by surname, and everyone seemed very conservative, students and teachers alike. I did take Persian classes in Leiden, but I generally felt more at home in Amsterdam, even though I realised I could not tolerate the situation even there for much longer either.

All these considerations together led to the conclusion that I did not want to continue on the path I was on. In 1973, I gave up my safe position at the Dutch Department of the University of Amsterdam. This immediately created an enormous sense of freedom, enabling me to pursue my second love: the study of Middle Eastern history. A year later, I finished my degree in Arabic, with Persian and Turkish as subsidiary [subjects]. Now I looked for a suitable subject in which I could put all my different capabilities together. Having re-discovered the wealth of Dutch archival sources, I resolved to focus on the maritime economic past of South Arabia, of Al-Mukhâ in particular, during the early decades of the seventeenth century, when the Ottoman occupying forces were driven out by the Qâsimid imâms. Contemporary Yemeni chronicles and biographies would be explored for political and military developments; Dutch records preserved in the archives of the VOC—the Dutch East India Company maintained a semi-permanent factory in the Tihâma port for 150 years—for economic data. In this project, actually, my passion for both Dutch and Arab history, my competence in the source languages involved, my philological, codicological, archival and palaeographical skills and, not least, my various experiences in Near Eastern countries merged. This was, so to say, my axial experience.

Who were the leading scholars in this field at the time?

As far as the Middle Ages and early modern history are concerned, Middle Eastern historiography, I discovered, was (and still is) based mainly on annalistic chronicles and biographical accounts providing for the most part dynastic and military information. In the area of socio-economic history, reconstructed on the evidence of a multitude of documents, there was (and still is) a lot less activity. But that was exactly the area I wanted to work in! Let me give some examples. In his Ph.D. thesis, Lein Oebele Schuman, my first professor in Arabic, focuses on the *Qilâdat al-Nahr*, a chronicle written by Abû Makhrama (±1540), dealing *inter alia* with the Portuguese arrival in Southern Arabia from 1513 onwards.⁶ Basically, this is a photomechanical edition of a handwritten Arabic text version, supplemented with a translation into modern English and a limited number of mainly philological comments. This type of research exemplifies an age-old tradition. To Schuman's family belong European scholars like Oscar Löfgren⁷ and Gentwell R. Smith,⁸ and Yemeni historians such as 'Abd Allâh Muhammad al-Hibshî⁹ and Sa'id 'Abd al-Fattâh 'Âshûr.¹⁰ In fact, these researchers are philologists rather than historians.

Robert B. Serjeant, on the other hand, a top Arabist and anthropologist who had lived in Aden when it was still a British protectorate, collected in his *The Portuguese off the South Arabian Coast* extensive quotations from various Hadramî manuscripts.¹¹ He does not aim at a synthesis, but simply juxtaposes different accounts, leaving it to his readers to construct a chain of events. But worse, long-lasting patterns are far more important to him than ever-changing facts. Situations in one century can be clarified by situations from another one. So he is not a historian either. Then there were the writings of the pre-war Company historian Heerd Terpstra. His study on the *Westerkwartieren* or 'Western Districts' of the VOC,¹² based on dozens of records, was very useful, although it concentrated on political and military events, and was thoroughly eurocentric. Whereas Van Leur, Niels Steensgaard¹³ and Meilink-Roelofs rightily drew attention to economic issues, they treated Yemen and its main port only in passing, deriving their insights or paradigms, moreover, from a very limited number of (mainly edited) documents.

And before I forget: every Wednesday Margot van Opstall, Marius Roessingh (both archivists working at the Algemeen Rijksarchief) and you, Leonard, used to organise the so-called Loempia lunch at a Chinese restaurant around the corner for visiting VOC researchers from all over the world who happened to be visiting the archive. During those lunches we would exchange information about our recent discoveries. Together with monthly Saturday morning meetings at the Amsterdam Historical Museum where enthusiastic historians of overseas history used to present their latest research in a more formal manner, these get-togethers were very inspiring and useful, not only for a lone wolf like me but surely for everybody. Margot and Marius both sadly passed away in 1986 and not long after their death these meetings came to an end.

In conclusion, I put a lot of time into getting to know the field, and I established that the economic history of Yemen was both important and understudied. The Dutch presence in South Arabia, moreover, was almost a 'blind spot' in the historiography of the Company. In 1975, I approached Mrs Meilink-Roelofs—recently appointed extraordinary professor of the history of European expansion at Leiden University—who accepted me as a Ph.D. student, even though my plan of using a 'double perspective' by treating Western as well as Arabic sources did not appeal to her much. I visited her regularly in The Hague. We had conflicting worldviews, but we got along quite well. She was supervising some promising Ph.D.s at the time: Jurrien van Goor, Hugo K. s' Jacob, Christiaan Jörg and Frank Lequin, to name just a few.

How did your first book progress from there?

Personally, I wanted to leave the Netherlands again, and I was adamant about going to Cairo—the Egyptian capital being the location for some of the more important Yemeni codices, kept in the *Dâr al-Kutub* or ‘National Library.’ Professor Meilink agreed, and I left in 1976 with a generous scholarship from ZWO,¹⁴ which covered my expenses for living and working in Cairo. It also allowed Rie and our two young children to accompany me.

We lived on Zamâlek, an island in the Nile, and right across from us the new library building was under construction. The island itself was very picturesque. Soldiers swam by all the time—it was part of their training to cross the Suez Canal I suppose. Feluccas charged with all types of earthenware jars sailed along. In the light of the moon touching love scenes were shot by film directors supported by their crew. Peasants had won small plots of land from the river to cultivate their crops, and they fished with little lanterns at night. Peasants, fishermen and other creatures, this whole shady underworld lived in cabins along the riverside. I became acquainted with them, and Rie and I actually got to know them well as friends. I was able to arrange that every morning one of the boys from these huts would row me to the library in his little fishing boat—arriving on the opposite side, I had to plough through the mud a bit in order to get ashore, it’s true, but it was so much shorter and more agreeable than taking the long route over the bridge by bus in the murderous heat! You can imagine that the other less enterprising (mostly very proper) scholars working in the *Dâr al-Kutub* thought that this bearded giant who emerged from the Nile River did not quite fit the description of a real scholar. No doubt they thought I was insane, or at least highly eccentric. But, needless to say, in Cairo (and Alexandria) I also made several friends among scholars studying South Arabian history such as Ayman Fu’âd Sayyid—who composed an impressive repertory of Yemeni manuscripts¹⁵—Muhammad ‘Abd al-‘Âl Ahmad,¹⁶ Fârûk ‘Uthmân Abâza¹⁷ and Jâd Tâhâ.¹⁸

After having lived in Egypt for about a year, Rie and I went to North Yemen for the very first time. We had sent the children to Rie’s parents in the Netherlands, because we felt it would be better for them. We immersed ourselves in Yemeni life, which turned out to be totally different from the Egyptian way of doing things. Yemen may have been a republic since 1967, but in fact it was still very much a tribal area of which large parts had not really been brought under any kind of government control. However, this was already changing right then—Yemen is so strategically located that many countries were more than willing to reform and develop

its age-old infrastructure. Foreign companies, from Chinese to Dutch and German firms, were building asphalt roads at an incredible pace. Asphalt notwithstanding, it was still a beautiful country. The Red Sea coast or *Tihâma*, unbearably hot with a 100 per cent humidity rate, has a partly African population and culture, whereas the mountainous hinterland with its green terraces is inhabited by pure Arabs.

What about Al-Mukhâ, the main subject of my research? On a memorable day, after a tiring journey all the way down from Ta'izz through the burning plain of the *Tihâma*, we approached that legendary city. Then we saw a heap of ruins in the sand. It seemed like a still from an old western movie. We drove into this deathly quiet village with a jeep full of heavily armed tribesmen. We asked where the city centre was—and we were told that we had already reached it. Al-Mukhâ was, in fact, a most desolate place. A handful of three- to four-storeyed ramshackle houses, reminiscent of the once busy trading port, stood amidst a vast number of poor fishermen's reed huts, within a wide mud wall that had for the most part collapsed. A few rusty carcasses lay scattered on the beach. The lighthouse, once a beacon for cargo vessels, had gone out of use.

After two to three months we returned to the Netherlands. I now had the feel of both local historiographical sources offering a wealth of written data and a lot of local experience under my belt. I was now eager to study the relevant VOC records in The Hague. It was wonderful to work in the old Archives building at Bleijenburg, but very time-consuming. As few documents relate exclusively to Yemen, I always had to comb through caseloads of files to find even a mention of Al-Mukhâ. But whenever I did, it held a great sense of discovery. During a two-day interdisciplinary symposium at Bamberg held in October 1977, I expressed my opinion that the Dutch records are of paramount importance to the study of South Arabia's economic past. The printed version of this lecture, dating from 1978, was the first one of a long series of separate essays published since in a variety of languages and in a wide range of scholarly journals. Of course, getting to know eminent Yemen researchers of German and Swiss origin such as Prof. Hans Becker, Horst Kopp, Volker Höhfeld, Klaus Kreiser, Hans Steffen, Barbara Finster and Armin Schopen personally mattered greatly to me. Some of them became friends for life!¹⁹

In those days I switched from Prof. Meilink-Roelofs to the maritime historian Prof. Jaap R. Bruijn, Mrs Meilink having become increasingly disenchanted with me because I devoted so much time to minute research without presenting her with any results or, to put it bluntly, chapters of my thesis. Prof. Bruijn was more sympathetic to my 'currycomb' approach

to the archival data, although he did not want to supervise me without a scholar who would look at the Arabian side of things. Prof. Stefan Wild, successor to Schuman in Amsterdam, was willing to take up that part, and then I really had two great guiding lights with both a wealth of knowledge and a passion for the subject matter.

In the years that followed I completed my archival explorations, but for reasons of a personal nature that I shall not enter into here I was no longer in a hurry to finish. First of all, in 1988 I published with Brill in Leiden, in close cooperation with my Palestinian friend Avo Kaplanian, a bulky book including a variety of VOC documents of a socio-economic nature concerning early seventeenth-century Southern Arabia translated into Arabic with historical annotations.²⁰ Then, after a serious copyright war with Brill, I established my own publishing house, called *D'Fluyte Rarob*. A second edition of the Arabic book was successfully launched, and in the end 'Ubâdi Publishers in Sana'a even distributed a third one at Yemeni prices which is, to my great pleasure, still available. At about the same time, 1988–89, a large travelling exhibition on Yemen visited the Netherlands, and I was asked by the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam to arrange the section on Dutch–Yemeni relations through the ages. It had to be done within three months, so I put all my contacts into the project, both Dutch and foreign ones. And we succeeded in getting the job done! I even managed to publish an accompanying book on the activities displayed by the VOC in South Arabian waters during the 1614–55 period, containing a wealth of hitherto unknown data.²¹

Finally, in order to distance myself temporarily from matters Yemeni, I edited six original Dutch tragedies, in three volumes, dealing with decisive episodes in Islamic—read Timurid, Persian-Afghan and Turkish—history, dating from the Golden and Silver Age.²² In three subsequent seasons, from 1992 to 1994, they were officially presented in the national *Theaterfestival* at The Hague. One of them, Johannes Serwouters' *Tamerlan* (1657), was staged and broadcast; transformed into an opera by Klaas ten Holt it is still awaiting performance. Another one, Abraham Kemp's *Osman* (1623)—featuring the gifted Sultan who in 1618 granted the Dutch permission to conduct commerce in the Red Sea area—was played twice in Beograd. It should be remarked here that, tracing the patron of Frans van Steenwyk's *Koelikan* (1745), the Afghan conqueror of Persia and India, Nâdir Shâh, I could rely on Lequin's admirable thesis on the Company's staff in Bengal.²³

However, I could no longer ignore the serious pressure exerted on me by my two supervisors. I had to take my Ph.D. degree as soon as

possible. So, in 1997 the long-planned book was published under the title of *Al-Mukhâ: Profile of a Yemeni Seaport...*²⁴ It was a thorough description of the city of Al-Mukhâ and its shipping.

What has happened since then?

Just the description of seventeenth-century Al-Mukhâ had taken up an entire book, and I had not even begun to treat its international commerce! Having both time and material, I decided accurately to analyse the city's trade by product. I started with minerals, then coffee, porcelain, pepper and other spices, cottons and silks. Some details that I needed were hard to find, and I am afraid I can rightly say I have an obsession with completeness.... Nevertheless, in 2006 my second book on the Red Sea port appeared, entitled *Al-Mukhâ: The Transoceanic Trade of a Yemeni Staple Town...*²⁵ It deals with coffee, spices and textiles. The third book which will treat such products as dyes, aromatics and stimulants, in addition to the minerals and porcelains just referred to, is now well under way. So 'The Continuing Story of Al-Mukhâ' is going to be a real triptych!

As far as possible, all of the commodities have been dealt with in a uniform manner. The areas of production, ports of origin, destination, varieties and qualities, quantities and prices, and, not least, profits realised or losses suffered: these are described in the smallest details. The consequent conversion of weights and currencies into local *bahârs* and reals of eight makes comparisons possible. Not only have the commercial activities displayed by Indian Muslims and Bâniyans been analysed, but also Dutch and English trading operations, even though these often prove to have been utterly futile. I consider the reconstruction of the city, shipping and trade of Al-Mukhâ at the turn of the seventeenth century as a contribution to the maritime economic history of Yemen, of the Peninsula, of the Arab world and, in the end, of the Indian Ocean. In my view, local studies are the solid materials for wider surveys or explanatory models.

Finally, my funding in the past has mainly come from ZWO, from museums, from the Yemeni government and, last but not least, from Rie, who has always supported my investigations wholeheartedly. The Yemeni government arranged for several trips to South Arabia during which I explored the ports of Hudayda, Aden, Mukallâ, Al-Shihr and Sayhût, in addition to that of Al-Mukhâ, and lectured at universities and institutes in Sana'a, Ta'izz and Aden on the basis of my publications. These lectures were all delivered in Arabic—English still being considered a colonial language, and therefore not held in high esteem. In addition, education in Yemen is progressing only slowly, so most students would not be capable

of attending a seminar in English. I always stressed the importance of the Dutch sources for Yemeni history as well as the necessity of learning Dutch for enterprising scholars who would like to have access to this wealth of material. There is a limited group of highly qualified scholars in Yemen—I may refer to Sayyid Mustafâ Sâlim, Husayn al-‘Amrî and Muhammad ‘Abd al-Rahîm Jâzim, all of whom are broaching Yemeni social and economic history by editing collections of records²⁶—but unfortunately academic life is extremely difficult. There is little money or funding, and there is much bureaucracy, two factors greatly restricting scholars in their opportunities. I tried all I could to pull some promising Yemeni historians into the highly successful TANAP project of Leiden University, which has now come to an end, but my efforts turned out to be fruitless.

Inshallâh! As I noted in the introduction to the second part of my triptych, my work is meant ‘to encourage historians, Yemenis and non-Yemenis, to steer this rarely sailed course.’ If they do not want to steer their own vessel they may come on board ‘D’ Fluyte Rarob’ and navigate the largely forgotten past of Yemen’s maritime trade with me as their pilot!

Notes

- 1 Cf. B. Paasman, *Wandelen onder de palmen: De morele actualiteit van het koloniale verleden* (Amsterdam: 2000).
- 2 M.A.P. Meilink-Roelofsz, *Asian Trade and European Influence in the Indonesian Archipelago between 1500 and about 1630* (1962; repr. The Hague: 1969).
- 3 J.C. van Leur, *Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History*, translated by J.S. Holmes and A. van Marle. Selected Studies on Indonesia by Dutch Scholars, 1 (The Hague, etc.: 1955). The Original Dutch studies were published in 1934 and 1947.
- 4 Included in R. Raben and H. Spijkerman (eds.), *De Archieven van de Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie/The Archives of the Dutch East India Company (1602–1795): Algemeen Rijksarchief, Eerste Afdeling...* (The Hague: 1992).
- 5 Only recently, a (supervisory) contribution in this field appeared: R. Harper, *Als God met ons is... Jacob van Maerlant en de vijanden van het christelijke geloof. Nederlandse Literatuur en Cultuur in de Middeleeuwen, XIX* (Amsterdam: 1999).
- 6 L.O. Schuman, *Political History of the Yemen at the Beginning of the 16th Century: Abu Makhrama’s account of the Years 906–927 H (1500–1521 A.D.) with Annotations* (Groningen: 1960).

- 7 Ibn al-Mugawîr, *Descriptio Arabiae Meridionalis, praemissis capitibus de Mecca et parte regionis Higâz, qui liber inscribitur Ta-rih al-mustabsir, secundum codicem Constantinopolitanum Hagiae Sophiae 3080 collato codice Leidensi or. 5572, cum adnotatione critica* edidit O. Löfgren. 2 vols. *Seriei Operum Cura Legati De Goeje Editorum*, XIII: 1–2 (Leiden: 1951–54).
- 8 Ibn Hâtim, *The Ayyûbids and early Rasûlids in the Yemen (567–694/1173–1295)*, ed. G.R. Smith. 2 vols. *E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series, New Series*, 26:1–2 (London: 1974–78).
- 9 Ibn al-Daybâ', 'Abd al-Rahmân b. 'Alî b. Muhammad b. 'Umar, *Bughyat al-mustafîd fî târîkh madînat Zabîd: Ta'lif - al-mutawaffâ sanata 944*. Tahqîq 'Abd Allâh Muhammad al-Habashî [read al-Hibshî] (San'a': 1979).
- 10 Yahyâ b. al-Husayn b. al-Qâsim b. Muhammad, *Ghâyat al-amânî fî akhbâr al-quṭr al-Yamanî*. Ta'lif - (1035–1100 h, 1625–1679 m). Tahqîq wa-taqdîm Sa'id Abd al-Fattâh 'Âshûr. Murâja'at Muhammad Mustafâ Ziyâda. 2 vols. (Al-Qâhira: 1388h/1968 m). Turâthunâ, s.no.
- 11 R.B. Serjeant (ed.), *The Portuguese off the South Arabian coast: Hadrami chronicles. With Yemeni and European accounts of Dutch pirates off Mocha in the seventeenth century* (1963; reprint with minor corrections, Beirut: 1974).
- 12 H. Terpstra, *De Opkomst der Westerkwartieren van de Oost-Indische Compagnie (Suratte, Arabië, Perzië)* (The Hague: 1918).
- 13 N. Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade*, new ed. (1973. Chicago: 1974.)
- 14 Nowadays NWO, the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research.
- 15 Ayman Fu'âd Sayyid, *Masâdir târîkh al-Yaman fî al-'asr al-islâmî*. Wada'ahâ -. Nusûs wa-Tarjamât, 7. (Al-Qâhira: 1974).
- 16 Cf., for example, Muhammad 'Abd al-'Âl Ahmad, *Banû Rasûl wa-banû Tâhir wa-'alâqât al-Yaman al-khârîjiyya fî 'ahdihimâ 628–932 h / 1231–1517 m* (Al-Iskandariyya: 1980).
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- 18 One may consult Jâd Tâhâ, *Siyâsat Barîtâniyâ fî janûb al-Yaman* (Al-Qâhira: 1969–70).
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